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Plan for Hill Intelligence Unit Assailed

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Opponents of establishing a new Senate committee to oversee intelligence activities let fly with a barrage of criticisms yesterday in a hearing before the Senate Rules Committee.

They concentrated their criticism on the proposal that the new committee have exclusive jurisdiction over all foreign and domestic intelligence-gathering agencies.

But also present was a feeling described by Rules Committee member Sen. James B. Allen (D-Ala.):

"Hysteria has subsided. Congress is taking a more objective view" because people

at home "feel Congress is out to destroy intelligence agencies."

Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) declared his strong opposition to the new committee and recommended instead funding a permanent subcommittee of his committee that would concentrate on intelligence.

Stennis' Armed Services Committee, under the new proposal, would lose its jurisdiction over the Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence activities of the military services.

"You strip away this authority and leave the Armed Services Committee undressed and in public as far as being effective" in carrying out its defense responsibilities, Stennis declared at one point.

Sen. Roman Hruska (R-Neb.), speaking on behalf of the Judiciary Committee, said that body voted Tuesday to recommend removing FBI intelligence activities from the new committee's jurisdiction.

CIA Director George Bush, who had asked to testify, said that, "speaking as head of the intelligence community and for the administration," he "could not support" the proposal for a new committee as currently drafted.

"Certain section," Bush said, "would unnecessarily hinder our foreign intelligence effort."

Four of nine Rules Committee members indicated by their statements and questions yesterday that they have doubts about the new committee as proposed by a resolution, the Senate Government Operations Committee passed.

Rules Committee Chairman Sen. Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.), who also is a member of Armed Services, said that because of the conflicting views, he would recommend that the resolution remain in his committee for 30 days beyond the April 8 deadline he now has to report it to the Senate floor.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee and a chief proponent of the new committee, waited almost an hour to testify yesterday and then asked to be heard this morning so that he could prepare to meet the varied criticisms.

Stennis' presentation set the tone for those who followed. Stennis said the CIA overall had done an "excellent job" gathering intelligence in foreign areas.

"I'm ashamed, ashamed of what CIA had done at home

in one of its bad moments," Stennis said, "but of course I knew nothing about it."

Stennis for years has been chairman of the Armed Services subcommittee with authority to oversee CIA activities.

"There's been more surveillance of the military part of CIA," he said, "than appears on the surface. I've been rather shut mouth on this myself."

Stennis argued that his Armed Services Committee needs budget authorization jurisdiction over all aspects of defense intelligence because the remaining part of the defense budget is dependent upon it.

He added that if his committee did not authorize the intelligence part of the budget, it could not handle conferences with the House Armed Services Committee to iron out differences between defense authorization figures passed by the two houses.

Bush took aim at a provision in the resolution that would permit public disclosure of intelligence information over the objection of the President.

Arguing that the section "could impede the flow of sensitive information to the committee," Bush recommended it "be deleted."

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